

Sunday, September 23, 1956.

Recollections of J. O. Leek

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

One of the most interesting persons I know is J. O. Leek of 905 Maple avenue, who remembers eighty-one years of local history. He was born in 1875 on the northeast corner of Tenth and Ohio streets, the property now occupied by Terre Haute Electric Supply Co. His parents were Clay C. and Margraet Leek.

The father, Clay C. Leek was the Yardmaster for the Evansville and Terre Haute Railroad, now the C. & E. I. Railroad. After his



Dorothy J. Clark

retirement as yardmaster, he went into the drug business at Sixth and Tippecanoe streets, across the street from the old Big Four Depot. It seems that the Big Four acquired the property where the depot is now, and due to the fact that the city had to run Tippecanoe street through somehow, and since there were two houses in the way at the time, is the reason there is such a big bend in the street beside the depot. Later these houses were torn down, and Monninger and Dressler built the Great Northern Hotel, which did a thriving business in those days. How many readers can remember when the Union Station was at Tenth and Chestnut? And the way the trains had to back around to get into the old station before the present station was built?

Recalls School Days.

Mr. Leek can remember all his school teachers when he attended the "Old Sixth Ward School"—now the Thompson School at Twelfth and Ohio. He jokingly said that he bet his name was carved on all the desks there! His first teacher was Mary Wilkin, then Fanny McCuen, Mary Flanagan, Elizabeth Solomon, Miss Robbins, Margaret Kenny, Margaret Preston, Albert Wyeth, the critic teacher and Harriet Paige, music teacher. Of the class whose teacher was Miss Preston, there are only two still living, and he has a picture of this group.

Every summer vacation during his school years J. O. had a job, and they were many and varied. He made cores (of sand and flour) at the American Car and Foundry under boss Billy Utz. Two summer vacations were spent in the bottling plant of the Terre Haute Brewing Co. at Ninth and One-half and Poplar. No one is still living who worked with him at that time. With the primitive equipment used then, if a man bottled four barrels a day, he went home tired.

Another job was at the Crawford and Nippert Rolling Mill located just below Thirteenth and Crawford. He "fed nails" for William Stevenson and Perry Cravens and was paid 22 cents for 100 pounds of of these cut steel nails, not the wire cut nails we are familiar with today.

Community Affairs File

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Took Business Course.

After two years at Wiley High School, he took a business course at the Garvin and Isbell Business College located in what is now the third floor of the Montgomery-Ward building. William Kivits is the only student of his class still living.

On remarking how Wabash Ave. has changed from those days, he recalled that there are only two businesses still in existence that were on Wabash when he was a small child—Joseph's and the Hoff Grocery at Thirteenth and Wabash. He remembers when there were only one-story buildings on Wabash, Delmonico's Restaurant where Voorhees and many other famous men dined, Nicolai's with its fabulous bar and elaborate dining room, the old Post Office on South Sixth, first door south of the alley behind Montgomery-Ward, and the First National Bank at Fourth and Wabash when Frank Teel was cashier. At Nineteenth and Wabash was the ball park, and from there on east nothing but cornfields.

Mule-Drawn Street Cars.

In those early days, the residents rode on mule-drawn street cars. One line went north on Sixth street to Locust, then east past the old Rose Polytechnic Institute (now Gerstmeyer) then north again on Thirteenth. Later a mule line was established starting from Eleventh and Wabash to Poplar, east to Thirteenth, then south on Thirteenth to Crawford. Then electricity replaced

the mules, and Mr. Leek was lucky enough to be a passenger on the first electric car to come out of the barns at Ninth and Cherry to make its first run.

After being in the drug store business with his father, he moved the store to Fontanet, Ind., and was also postmaster there for 10½ years. It was during this time that there was the tragic powder mill explosion. It was only due to the fact that a train was late for which he had a pouch of mail that he was not in the office of the powder mill when the blast came. As it was, he was too close for comfort being on the back porch of the drug store. Most vivid in his memories was the collapse of the Fontanet school. The walls fell not, and the roof fell in, but the only child injured was Willy Hodges when his hysterical mother tried to pull him out of the wreckage.

Returned To Terre Haute.

In 1911 Mr. Leek moved back to Terre Haute and established his drugstore at the northwest corner of Thirteenth and Eighth avenue, and was there for 15 years. In 1918 he became a member of the city council under Mayor Charles

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Hunter for three years. The next four years from 1922 to 1926 he served on the Board of Safety under Mayor Davis.

Then from 1926 to 1929 he held the office of country treasurer. "I have seen many changes take place in Terre Haute," he said. "Where the Grand Opera House is now, was earlier a spacious park with benches, etc., for the guests of the Terre Haute House. There were band concerts held at a bandstand on the north side of Wabash near Seventh street, as there were no buildings east of 666 Wabash."

At one time Mr. Leek drove a delivery wagon for the wholesale drug concern of Cook, Bell and Black, located where Woolworth used to be and where the Root Store has recently expanded. He remembers in 1892 there were ten drug stores in the city, and it must be remembered that drug stores also sold paint and liquors. It was at this time that the old covered bridge across the Wabash had been torn down and the present bridge was being constructed, so a ferry was the only means of crossing. The black horse which pulled the delivery wagon was an unpredictable creature, and while crossing on the ferry to make deliveries at the drug store in West Terre Haute, the horse became fractious and backed up allowing the rear wheels of the wagon to drop down and without an end gate, naturally everything in the wagon slid out and dropped out of sight into the river.

Mr. Leek remembers that there were jugs of whiskey and gin and several of wine. Since each jug weighed about twenty pounds it is possible they are still down there on the bottom of the Wabash River awaiting for an ambitious diver to rescue them and their well-aged contents. At that time one could purchase the very best whiskey for two or three dollars a gallon, plus only \$1.10 tax.

Another Amusing Incident.

This same troublesome black horse also figures in another amusing incident according to Mr. Leek. His employer, Mr. Cook, decided to invite the new minister Dr. Crume to take a tour of the city with him and acquaint him with his new flock. J. O. was asked to harness up the horse to Mr. Cook's buggy. Since the horse had been trained to deliver liquor at the saloons as well as the drug stores, he naturally came to a full stop in front of each one, much to the embarrassment of poor Mr. Cook and to the complete bewilderment of the new minister.

Mr. and Mrs. Leek have celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary. They have a daughter Mary Leek Isgrig of Terre Haute, a son, James Ferris Leek of Memphis, Tenn., and one grandson.

Pioneer Lady and Her Ancestors

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Mrs. Inez Pound Fair, "Aunt Ina" as she is familiarly known to her neighbors and a host of relatives, is the embodiment of the pioneer spirit as she nears her ninety-second birthday. Living in the farm house by herself, she has for more than half a century prepared meals on the old kitchen range every day without interruption, and still takes care of herself with an independence and vigor worthy of pioneer days.

Mrs. Fair's ancestors were among the early settlers in Honey Creek Township, coming from



Dorothy J. Clark

Her father, Columbus S. Pound, a Civil War veteran, was a lieutenant in the Cavalry who had the distinction of having two horses shot out from under him in the Battle of Lookout Mountain. He came home from the war in the year that Mrs. Fair was born.

Traditions Of Civil War.

As a consequence, her early years were steeped in the traditions of the Civil War and the colorful occasions of veteran reunions, dedications of public buildings, and the like in which the Civil War vets took an active part during the years following the war. Many of those occasions made an indelible impression on her and are recalled with remarkable accuracy, as well as other social and civic events of the 70's and 80's of the past century. Among the most important of the public celebrations which she recalls were the dedication ceremonies of the Vigo County Courthouse and the old Masonic Hall and School at Riley, Indiana.

Inez Pound married William Fair almost three-quarters of a century ago. They were married by the Rev. Jesse Wilson of Riley, Ind. Mrs. Fair has some of the garments which she wore at her wedding and proudly displays the fine needlework, pointing out how tiny her waist was then.

All of her life she has remained on the farm doing her full share of the household duties and outside work such as fell to the lot of most farm women in the old days. Working outdoors in the garden, and keeping her yard beautiful with flowers has continued to occupy much of her time during these later years after her husband's death in 1936.

Diplomas Proudly Displayed.

One of the main accomplishments of her life, at least as she views it, was the education of her only child, LeRoy Fair. On the walls of one of the rooms of the farm home are proudly displayed the framed diplomas of this son and the pictures of his grandparents. One of the hobbies of Mrs. Fair has been the saving of clippings from the Terre Haute newspapers of important happenings over the years.

Mrs. Fair still has and uses many of the things she had when she went to housekeeping. It has been a part of her domestic economy never to discard anything that is still usable just for the sake of replacing it with "these modern contraptions." She has had two cooking stoves since she was

married and the Schill range with a few repairs over the years, remains shining and usable. The garden hoe given to her shortly after her marriage is getting worn very thin, but was good enough to tend and raise a garden last year. Habits of hanging the butter in the well to keep it cool in the summer, of making soap each year, as well as canning fruits and vegetables for winter use, remain a part of her daily life.

Recalls Origin of Churches.

I was particularly interested in what she told me about her great-grandfather, Rev. Samuel K. Sparks, founder of the First Baptist Church in Terre Haute as well as several other churches in the surrounding area. He was born in Louisville, Ky., in 1786, coming here and raising a corn crop in

1812. In 1875, when nearly 90 years old, he attended an old settlers' meeting. When called upon, he told of having seen trouble with the Indians. One night some horses were stolen, and he described the pursuit and recapture of 14 stolen horses by making a night attack on the Indian camp and killing seven of the savages. He spoke of early clothing all made of animal skins, of the cedar "poridgers" and wooden dishes and forks; how he came here as a "ranger" in 1812 and bought land from a man named Ross.

The First Baptist Church was organized in Terre Haute, July 9, 1836, in a school house at the corner of Fifth and Walnut streets. There had been Baptist preaching by Rev. Sparks prior to that time, but no organized church. The church was formed with nine members: Rev. and wife, Catherine; Joseph Cooper and wife, Phoebe Ann; Henry and Sarah Thomas, William and Keziah Stark and Massa Pound. In February, 1837, William Stark was chosen first deacon and Joseph Cooper as first clerk. Mr. Sparks acted as pastor, though never formally called to that work. In June, 1837, Mrs. Taylor was received as a member, and became the oldest member of the church. Rev. Sparks served as pastor until November, 1844. During 1837-38 Rev. George C. Chandler was assistant pastor for about eight months.

Community Affairs File

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Congregations Grew.

During these years many persons had united with the church, but owing chiefly to the formation of several other churches near Terre Haute, with which the members from the country united, the city church in 1845 still numbered only eight members. Rev. Sparks organized Baptist churches at Mt. Zion, 7 miles south of town near a settlement of Kentucky people, in 1841, building a church in 1855 where he was pastor for 29 years. He also organized Salem, New Providence, west of the river; Otter Creek in 1852 and Oregon in Prairie Creek. In the autumn of 1845, Rev. Joseph A. Dickson was called to the pastorate and the Universalist Church on Fourth street was rented at \$5 per month. In 1847 there were 27 members

and they started to build a church on the west side of Fourth street, between Mulberry and Eagle streets. They first finished the basement for use, and in 1850 the upper part of the church and cupola were completed.

Rev. Dickson Resigned.

In the spring of 1850 Rev Dickson resigned. The membership stood at 55. Then Rev. W. Leggett became pastor until ill health compelled him to resign. In 1851 Rev. F. Stanley was engaged for 6 months. Soon after this, he and 8 other members obtained letters of dismission to form a Second Baptist Church. In June 1852, Rev. F. Snider was called. In May 1853, Rev. David Taylor became pastor, succeeded by Rev. J. R. Ash in 1854. In Dec. 1856, Rev. E. G. Taylor was called to labor for 4 years. In Dec. 1860, Rev. Joseph Brown became pastor, but less than a year later, Sept. 10, 1861, the church was destroyed by a tornado after only 18 years use. Again the Universalist Church was rented. In Nov. 1861, a lot on the northwest corner of Sixth and Cherry was purchased for \$2,800 and a chapel built on it. In May, 1865, Rev S. M. Stimson became pastor remaining 7 years and now the congregation numbered 300. During his time a church was erected on South Second street, afterwards known as Strawberry Hill Chapel. In 1873, Rev. Chas. R. Henderson became pastor. The cornerstone of the church at the northwest corner of Sixth and Cherry was laid July 22, 1877, and dedicated April 22, 1880 by Rev L. Kirkley. The Second Baptist

Church had ceased as an organization. In 1914 the cornerstone of the present church at the southwest corner of Sixth and Walnut was laid, and the dedication ceremonies took place Oct. 25, 1916.

Ninetieth Anniversary.

This account was found among the clippings of Mrs. Fair. It told of the 90th anniversary of the founding of the First Baptist Church and the program was most unusual. On the rostrum proper was depicted an old-time home, with logs burning in the fireplace. On the high mantle were two brass candlesticks which were brought here from New York at the time of the church's founding. They were used in the church for years, then taken to Honolulu by the daughter of the donor who returned them to the church as a gift. Over the mantle were hung two oil paintings of Rev. and Mrs. S. K. Sparks. On the platform was the old organ whose tones had called early congregations to worship before the days of the electric organ. On the west of this setting was a huge birthday cake.

At the morning service there were 72 men and women who had been members of this church consecutively for more than 75 years.

Pioneers

One Hundred Years Old Today

5-12-57

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Today, May 12, 1957, Jasper Coffman is celebrating his one hundredth birthday! A few days ago it was my pleasure to visit with Mr. Coffman at the Kesler Nursing Home, 724 North Eighth street, where he has made his home for the last six years. Though his sight and hearing are somewhat impaired, his mind is very keen and his memory is positively amazing. Sometime ago he had suffered a broken hip, but is again able to walk around with the aid of his cane.

Jasper Coffman was born on a farm near Coal Creek in Fayette Township, Vigo County, Ind. His



Dorothy J. Clark fifth child in their family of four boys and four girls. In addition to farming Samuel worked as a carpenter for two dollars a day. As soon as the children were old enough, they had to help augment the family income. At the age of thirteen, Jasper began to work on a farm two miles north of Prairie-ton, and remained there until he was fifteen.

Early School Days.

During his early years Jasper attended the Bolton School House and the Hays School House, both township schools. He remembered two of his school teachers, both Irishmen and brothers, Pat and Will Ward. Some of the nearby families whose children also attended these schools were the Vermillions, Leeks, Beechams, Penningtons and since Jasper's mother had seven brothers, there were several Case cousins in attendance also.

father was Samuel Coffman who was born in 1824 in Ohio. His mother was Permelia Case, daughter of Joseph Case of Fayette Twp.

Since large families were the rule and not the exception in those early days, Mr. Coffman tried to explain how they managed to feed so many children. They raised large amounts of potatoes, cabbages and turnips and served them every day. The diet could not be varied, but it was certainly very filling to growing boys and girls.

Married In 1880.

In 1880 Jasper Coffman married Miss Lilly Bowen, daughter of John and Anna Bowen of Sandford, Ind. Their first child died in infancy, and their son was killed in a railroad accident at the age of 26. An orphan from the Rose Home was also reared by the Coffmans. Several of the nieces and nephews of Mr. Coffman plan to be with him today to help him celebrate his birth anniversary.

Jasper Coffman worked on the section gang for \$1.16 a day. Then in 1884 his mother's brother, Uncle John Case, persuaded him to come to Terre Haute to find work. This uncle owned a store on Wabash avenue and persuaded Mr. Willard Kidder to hire young Jasper to work in his Kidder's Flouring Mill located at the foot of Wabash avenue. His starting salary was \$1.25 per day, soon raised to \$1.50 per day. Later Mr. Kidder bought

the old McKee Mill and completely renovated it, putting Jasper in charge as foreman for four years.

In Charge of Farm.

Soon Mr. Kidder bought 1,140 acres of land on which to raise stock and put Jasper in charge of this operation. His recollections of these days are particularly clear. The export men would come through Terre Haute and would look over the cattle and hogs. At one sale, eight cars of cattle along with two cars of hogs

were shipped from this farm.

About this time in Jasper's life he became, in his words, "a changed man." He became a lay preacher, and was such a powerful speaker he was called upon to take charge when the little churches in the outlying areas were having their "revivals." Traveling evangelists were unknown in those days. Jasper preached the first funeral, that of his brother-in-law, in the newly built brick church at Rose Hill. His mother is buried in the graveyard there. He has preached funerals at Sandford, Oak Hill and Mt. Pleasant to name a few.

Rent \$1.50 Per Month.

When Mr. and Mrs. Coffman first came to Terre Haute, they rented the property at Second and Mulberry streets for \$1.50 a month. They lived in part of it and sublet the rest to other tenants. Even the barn was utilized in this way. Housing was very scarce in those days, it seems.

There is an interesting story connected with the decision of Mr. Willard Kidder to come to Terre Haute. He was employed in Michigan and a "For Sale" notice of a flour mill here led to his visiting this city and to the purchase of the mill. He began the manufacture of flour in Terre Haute in a mill grinding by stones one hundred barrels a day. In a few years two run of stone were added, showing that the new miller was succeeding. In 1881 the stones were replaced by rolls to manufacture patent flour. This was the first roller mill in this part of the country, and it led to a revolution in Terre Haute's flour business. The improvement in the grades of flour and increased output led to large sales in eastern and European cities. The Wabash Mills were further enlarged to daily capacity of 800 barrels, a monthly consumption of over 100,000 bushels of wheat.

Industrial Prominence.

It was not alone, however, in this one line of industry that Mr. Kidder won prominence in the industrial life of Terre Haute and Vigo County, for he was one of the three men who purchased the old Terre Haute street car line, improved it and changed the horse and mule power to electricity. He was also one of the organizers and director of the Terre Haute Traction Works; active in the organization and director of the Citizens Gas Company, which was instrumental in lowering the price of gas from two dollars to thirty-five cents thousand feet.

Mr. Coffman told of a Sunday visit to the Kidder's home on South Sixth street. He and his wife drove from the farm to town in the horse and wagon, turned in the

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

side drive and on back to the big barn, this being in the winter time. After the customary amenities had been observed, the men left the wives to their gossiping and took off for the barn for "man-talk." The holster had just recently polished both buggies, and when Jasper admired them, Mr. Kidder inquired which one he preferred. Embarrassedly, Mr. Coffman declined to state a preference, but after much urging, finally made his choice. Mr. Kidder said, "It is yours!" Mr. Coffman told me this little incident to show the generosity of his friend and employer.

On this one hundredth birthday, Mr. Coffman will be remembered by many of his friends and relatives as usual. Mr. Collings will present him with a large birthday cake as has been his custom for several years. When asked to what he attributed his long life, Mr. Coffman replied, "A clear conscience from being honest, and becoming a man of God!" Mrs. Kessler remarked that she had yet to see Jasper angry or "out of sorts," always an even disposition and good to say about everyone.

Coffman,
Jasper
100 years old

Does Patrick McAdams Hold Longevity Record?

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

TO THE VIGO COUNTY RECORD

The oldest man in Vigo county, Patrick McAdams, died in 1902 at the very great age of 109 years. At that time he held the record for Terre Haute and Vigo County, if not the state of Indiana.

Patrick McAdams was born on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1793, in County Cavin, Ireland, about 15 miles from Dublin. He emigrated to the United States in 1832, and located in the little village of Paradise, Lancaster county, Pa. After about a year, he decided to move westward, and in the fall of 1833 started by wagon over the rugged hills and mountains of the Alleghenies for Wheeling, W. Va.

Arriving at Wheeling, he took a steamer down the Ohio to Cincinnati. His point of destination was Dayton, and from Cincinnati to the small village on the Miami River he came by boat. Dayton, at that time, was composed of but a few dozen families, and was surrounded on all sides by heavy forests and swamps.

McAdams was not satisfied with his new location and made up his mind to settle in Indiana. For many days he followed the Indian trails and arrived in Ft. Wayne, where he settled down to make his future home.

About 1840 Patrick McAdams decided to return to Ireland for a visit. He got as far as New York, when he met Miss Annie Finnigan, a girl he had known when a boy in Ireland. They



DOROTHY J. CLARK

were married and without going to Ireland he brought his young wife back to the wilds of Indiana. They lived in Ft. Wayne until 1847 and while

there the only surviving son, John, was born.

McAdams was married when he was 40 years old, in one of the Andrew Jackson campaign years. He remembered well the stirring days of the 1840 campaign, the hard cider, and when "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" was the slogan of the Whig party.

In the year, 1851 Mr. McAdams, then 58 years of age and nearing the normal allotted time of man's life, as it was considered to be in those early days, removed to Terre Haute with his family.

The description given by Mr. McAdams of Terre Haute, as he found the city in 1851, was especially interesting. At that time the city boasted of a population of 3,500 persons. The business portion was confined to First, Second and Third streets, between Ohio and Mulberry

streets. The Wabash and Erie canal had just been completed when Mr. McAdams arrived here, and he secured employment almost immediately, unloading from the boats.

About the first equipment he helped unload was for the Terre Haute and Indianapolis Railroad, which was opened in 1852. Four engines had been purchased by the company and two engines were wanted at each end of the new railroad. Two of the engines

intended for Terre Haute came on canal boats from Toledo.

Mr. McAdams was employed for some time in the McGregor distillery. He remembered Chauncey Rose quite well and related an incident in the life of Terre Haute's first and most prominent citizen. A street was being graded in the vicinity of where the Terre Haute House now stands. McAdams was working on the grade and among the most active workers on the job was Chauncey Rose who could be seen during the working hours holding the handles of the plow to which a yoke of oxen was attached.

Terre Haute in 1852 was surrounded in part by heavy forests in which wild game abounded in plenty and to quote Mr. McAdams, "snakes were as plentiful as flies on a summer day." Ague and chills caused the early inhabitants to resort to heroic measures, and as a consequence, quinine and whiskey always had a good demand.

When the Civil War broke out, Patrick McAdams was too old to be accepted in the service, but even at that time he was yet quite a strong man and able to perform a day's work. He had been a member of Ireland's militia prior to the year 1810, when the little Emerald Isle, Scotland and England were threatened and greatly alarmed by Napoleon's threats of an invasion.

His trip from Ireland across the stormy Atlantic in 1832 took eight weeks. Since he was 15 years of age McAdams had found solace and comfort in smoking tobacco. He and his pipe were inseparable friends. Theories regarding the use of tobacco are knocked sky high when one confronts such evidence as Mr. McAdams was able to produce by living to 109 years!

When Patrick McAdams first came here he did general laborer's work, contracting and gardening, and was employed at some of the early pork houses and distilleries. The first two years the McAdams family lived in a rough log cabin near Johns' sawmill, owned by Demas Deming Sr.

Mrs. McAdams died in 1880, and all of the five children except John died before their father. In 1902 Patrick McAdams lived with John, who was born in 1843, his constant companion for many years. In addition to being the oldest citizen, McAdams was the oldest in active membership of the congregation of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, of which he had been a devout member for many years.

According to the local city directories (which begin in 1858), the McAdams does not

appear until 1872. Before that time they evidently lived outside the city limits. In 1872 Patrick was listed as a "drayman" who lived in a house on the west side of First street between Sheets and Wilson streets. (Sheets became College street).

In 1874 Daniel McAdams, a fireman, was listed with Patrick as residing "on the west side of First street south of Wilson." The next year they moved to the west side of Second street, north of Moffatt (now Washington Avenue). Patrick's other son, John, was listed as a "turner" for R. L. Ball. Daniel was a laborer. In 1877, Daniel, the laborer; John, the turner; and Patrick, the laborer, were all living at 1413 S. Second. The only change in 1878-9 was the addition of Miss Ellen McAdams at the same address.

In 1880-1, Patrick and his wife, Mrs. Ann, were listed along with their sons — Daniel, who worked at the distillery, and John, who was a policeman. The next year, Daniel, laborer; John, a turner again; Mrs. Mary; and Patrick were living at the same address.

By 1882 John McAdams had opened his own turner's shop at 1029 S. Second St., and Daniel was following the trade with him. Patrick was too old to work, as he was nearly 90 years of age then. Daniel does not appear after 1883.

By 1894, John McAdams was listed as a "turner and roofer" and had moved his

shop to 1409 S. Second, probably next door to the family home at 1413.

In 1902, the year 109-year-old Patrick McAdams died, the family consisted of Miss Anna, John and old Patrick and lived at 1409, while the shop was at 1407. Urban Redevelopment, of course, has changed this neighborhood entirely and all these locations are gone forever.

Do any of my readers have knowledge of anyone living longer than 109 years of age? Let us hear from you so we can confirm or deny this longevity record.

Vigo County Public Library
Community Affairs File

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

Abraham Van Ulzen nominated oldest resident 50 years ago

Ts JUL 2 3 1978



Fifty years ago, Herbert Briggs, a member of the Vigo County Historical Society, tried to locate the oldest residents of Terre Haute and Vigo County. Repeated requests for information in the local newspapers brought in much response.

Abraham Van Ulzen was nominated for that distinction. He was born in Holland in 1832, came to America when he was twelve years old, and settled in Vigo county. Before the Civil War, he was in the furniture and undertaking business near the courthouse on South Second street. The firm name was Van Ulzen & Azar.

Before the war broke out, several southern families who lived here went back south. One of these stored their furniture with Van Ulzen, saying that if they never returned, the furniture was his. Family members still have some of those pieces of furniture.

Van Ulzen served in Grant's army of the west during the Civil War, and later with Sherman in his march to the sea. He came back to settle in Terre Haute and take up his former trade. Later he bought a farm next to Colonel R. W. Thompson on Spring Hill, near Mount Pleasant Church and school.

In 1928, Van Ulzen was staying with William Van Ulzen in Lena, Ind., but his legal residence was still in Terre Haute. He was ninety-six years old.

A daughter of Sarah Wright King was nominated as an old-timer of the area. She was born on a farm near Georgetown, Illinois, in 1841. When a small child, her father moved to Indiana because there were so many snakes that he felt the country around Georgetown was not a safe place to bring up a family.

Her girlhood was spent on a farm north of Terre Haute. She was a sister of E. R. Wright, who was in the grocery business here from 1862

until his death, and of D. H. Wright, the photographer and daguerrotype maker here for many years, later of the firm of Wright & Holloway.

Sarah Wright married James King of Cincinnati, who afterwards became the partner of E. R. Wright, at Seventh and Wabash, where later the cigar store and Buff Kaufman's business was located. She had lived at 834 S. 7th St. for 47 years in 1928. She was 87 years old.

William H. Rippetoe, retired Methodist minister and Civil War veteran, as well as a member of the Three-Quarter Century Resident Club, and a member of Baird Post, GAR, was nominated at the age of 88 years.

William P. Sanford, also a Civil War veteran and a member of Baird Post, was nominated at age 87 years.

Another Civil War veteran, Captain Ed Ross, was born in Terre Haute in 1839. He was the oldest member of the Three-Quarter Century Club at 89 years.

The name of Sheldon Swope, jeweler, 85 years old, and a member of the Half-Century Club, was proposed. Mr Swope had been in business in Terre Haute since 1866, being one of the two Terre Haute business men in 1928 who could claim that distinction. He was the only living member of Company I, Fourteenth Indiana Volunteers, of Civil War fame, the first to leave Indiana for the battlefield while Oliver P. Morton was Governor of Indiana.

Another name, that of a very old Terre Haute resident and business man, was that of Joseph Strong, who had been in the wholesale spice and grocery business at Sixth and Ohio for many years, and who was 85 years old in 1928.

R. L. Alder, 86 years old then, came to this country from England. Members of the First Baptist church and many other residents remembered him for his singing of

"The Palms" on Easter Sundays through the years. He was a member of the Half Century Club.

Before Ross joined the Union army, his father told him that for every dollar he saved while in the army, he would give him two. When the war was over, young Capt. Ross had saved an unusual amount, an unusual circumstance as there was as much poker in the Civil War as there were "craps" during World War I and II.

In 1927, the county lost Aunt Sally Asbury, its only well known century-old resident, who was one of the only two living mothers of Civil War soldiers who received a special pension by Act of Congress.

That year Carlton C. Belt died at the age of 91 years. He was a pioneer photographer, taking daguerreotypes and tints during the Civil War times here.

Isaac Clatfelter, a well known shoe merchant, also died in 1927.

John N. Burcham, custodian of Memorial Hall until he resigned June 1, 1928, was proud to be 83 years old with the activities of a man in his sixties.

Earnest Fredrick Altekruze, born in 1823, arrived in Terre Haute at the age of seventeen years in 1840. Prussian by birth, he became a naturalized citizen in 1848 in Vigo county.

Obituaries frequently tell of early families. Joseph Henry Blake died in 1895 at the age of 61 years. He was born in Baltimore and came here with his father, Colonel Thomas H. Blake, in 1817. Col. Blake served as the first judge of the Circuit Court, a member of Congress, U.S. land commissioner (appointed by President Tyler), and trustee of the Wabash & Erie Canal. He also ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate.

A cousin, Dr. Richard Blake, came to Terre Haute in

1832 to practice medicine and engage in business. He returned to Maryland to marry Francesca Groverman.

The family descended from the Blakes who emigrated from England to Maryland at an early date. Dr. Blake returned to Maryland to die, and is buried there.

Colonel Blake died in 1856, and Joseph, aged 21, became the breadwinner for his widowed mother and seven brothers and sisters. Engaged in the wood and coal business, he was elected city clerk in 1856, and reelected in '57 and '58. In 1859 he was elected to a two-year term. He was elected county clerk by a majority of only twelve votes over Jacob Hager in 1860, the year Abraham Lincoln was elected, and served four years. His deputy was John B. Meyer, who died a few weeks prior to Mr. Blake.

At the expiration of his term of office, he was admitted to the bar and was engaged in legal and real estate business in Ellsworth, Kansas, until 1868 when he returned to Terre Haute.

Elected in 1870, he served one term as county commissioner. He built the first street railroad on East Wabash extending to the fairgrounds and on to Highland Lawn Cemetery, a very useful enterprise which hastened the many improvements in the eastern subdivisions.

At his death, Blake was survived by the widow, Mary, a granddaughter of Curtis Gilbert. They had two children, a son Joseph who died at the age of fifteen in 1885, and a daughter Helen born in 1883. The seven brothers and sisters survived him.

It would be interesting to find the oldest resident of Terre Haute or Vigo county at the present time. People are living longer these days, and many of the seniors would probably be well over the century mark.

TO MAR 4 1979

Harry Ross' adventures told

Harry Ross was supposed to be Terre Haute's oldest inhabitant when he was interviewed on his 96th birthday in 1897 at his home, 30 N. Fifth St.

The son of Ephriam and Anna Ross, Harry was born March 2, 1801, in Saratoga county, N.Y., the fifth of 12 children. While he was still very young, his parents moved to Albany, and then to Edwards on the Hudson river. His first recollections were of attending school at Albany.

The family next removed to Onondaga county, N.Y., and lived for many years on the site of the present city of Syracuse.

The three elder brothers, Russell, John and James, had gone West and were in the brick manufacturing business at Vincennes. They wrote back glowing accounts of the fine new country, and it was in 1819 that the remaining members of the family decided to move west and join the boys. None of them realized at the time the extensive step they had taken.

Indiana Bound

It was a year's undertaking. The emigrants began their journey in the fall of 1819, intending to follow the watercourse as much as possible. A great portion of the trip was made overland. The weather grew colder, the rivers were all low and progress was necessarily slow.

The stopping place was to have been Vincennes, but owing to the cold weather and freezing river, the little party was forced to stop at Wheeling, on the Ohio river, until the spring thaw.

It was about Christmas when the progress of the boat was checked by the ice. Early in March, the journey was resumed. Arriving at the mouth of the Wabash, the emigrants packed their belongings into wagons and proceeded through the slush and mud to Vincennes.

They located on the Grand Prairie about 40 miles north of Vincennes and about where Hutsonville, Ill., is now. In 1824, the three Ross brothers, Harry, James and Russell, came to Terre Haute and went into the brick business.

They rented timber land belonging to General Allen which was located about where the county poor farm was located in 1897 and started a brick yard. Plenty of wood was necessary to fire the brick kilns. They were afraid to get too near the river because of the prevalence of the chills and fever known as the "ager."

Indiana was a wilderness when the Ross family arrived. Wolves were plentiful and extremely savage. Mr. Ross told of hunting for large game. While he lived on Grand Prairie, the

an old elk. It had played havoc with the precious corn crops for several years. Many persons had caught sight of the animal, but none were able to kill him. Young Ross decided to try his luck.

"I took an old army musket," said the old gentleman, "and betook myself to a stack of prairie grass which had been fenced in and where I knew the elk would come if any place."

"Placing myself in an easy position, I rested my musket on the grass and waited. After a long watch I was rewarded by seeing the animal cautiously approaching, on he came until he was near my place of concealment.

"He was a magnificent specimen of his kind, and as he drew near, I was seized with a violent attack of 'buck fever.' My hands shook and the moving gun must have made a noise. Slight as it was, the elk heard it. He raised his magnificent head and sniffed the air suspiciously. The moment for action had arrived, and my first fear passed.

"Taking careful aim, I pulled the trigger and the cap snapped. The animal was off like the wind, but I managed to recap my piece and get a shot at him before he was out of sight. He was hit hard, and I could see him stagger from side to side."

According to Ross, the elk managed to disappear in the growing darkness. The next morning a party went out with Ross to track the elk and found the spot where he had lain down for the night. As there was no blood stain on the ground, they knew he was not seriously injured and gave up the chase. It was a great disappointment to young Ross. Some months later, the elk was shot and killed by one of the neighbors.

When the carcass was cut up, a lead slug was found fastened in his back bone. "That was my gun shot," Ross said. "Had the bullet been a good one and not an irregular lump of lead, the shot would have killed the elk. The successful hunter sent me a chunk that contained the bullet, and I tell you it tasted good."

According to local history sources, the old gentleman became quite animated during the interview as the recollections of his younger days came into his mind. He told of the grey wolves which frequented this part of the country. One wolf, caught in a trap, carried it three or four miles into the forest.

Money Shortage

Next to the "ager", the shortage of money during pioneer days was one of the greatest hardships encountered by the early settlers. There was actually no money at all, to speak of.

way in to the area, but there were no small coins and when business transactions were made requiring fractional currency the parties concerned proceeded to a blacksmith shop where the dollar was cut into eight "bits."

The bits were small and hard to carry and were so sharp they wore out the trouser pockets in short order. Men carried sturdy leather bags with drawstring tops to carry this sharp metal change in. So, they had almost as much trouble in keeping the money as they had in getting it.

Ross said that the postage on a letter from here to Onandago, his old home, was 25 cents and was paid at the end of the route. His parents

(over)

Historically

Speaking

By Dorothy Clark



Vigo County Public Library

REFERENCE

DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

wrote to their relatives in New York State and told them to quit writing letters, for they could not pay the postage for them at this end.

Many of the settlers who went to New Orleans on flatboats with their crops brought back specie with them, but it was many years before money became "anyways common."

"My brother James and I earned our first \$100 by making sausages," said Mr. Ross. "We filled sausages for Mr. Gilman who ran the first pork house in Terre Haute, and we purchased 80 acres of timber land

with the money received."

After a few years of making brick, they moved to the banks of the river just north of Johns' lumber yard. For many years the Ross brothers supplied all the brick used in Terre Haute for building purposes. Continuing at brickmaking until 1838 or 1840, the brothers sold out and went into general merchandising in a small frame building on Second Street between Main and Ohio in the middle of the block.

Just before Christmas, 1841, fire leveled that entire block of buildings

to the ground. The entire village turned out to fight the flames, but nothing could be done to check the furious fire, and the contents were destroyed also.

The Ross brothers had been in business at Darwin and left Terre Haute for that place immediately after the fire. They went into pork packing at that place, and after three years there, they returned to Terre Haute and rebuilt their store upon the former site.

The new block was built of brick, the first three-story building in town. It had an open front which was considered quite a metropolitan innovation at that time.

Mr. Ross made other investments. He had been a director of the First National Bank for over 28 years, a stockholder in the Vandalia Railroad and a member of its board of directors for many years. He retired from active business in 1861.

Tracing the life of area resident E.E. Dix,

TS MAY 25 1980

It was my pleasure to interview the late E. E. Dix while he was in his active 90s and in excellent health. Loved by all his friends and neighbors who appreciated his many kindnesses, he remained active in his church and grew roses and other beautiful flowers. He had two sons, Floyd E. and Rolland.

Mr. Dix traced his family back through many generations of Quakers to the year 1686 when the first Dix emigrated from England to America. Here are some of his memories as he told them to me.

"I was born in the southeast corner of Fairbanks Township, Sullivan County, Ind., on April 11, 1867, in a two-room log house. It was the custom at that time to build two log houses side by side connected with what we would call today a breezeway. One room had a plank floor, fireplace, beds in each corner with cord springs. The other room was the kitchen with a dirt floor, fireplace and handmade furniture. The doors, windows, everything was made right on the homeplace, even the old latchstring.

"My father and mother were hardworking farm people...had to be in that time, for the country was nearly all timber and had to be cleared. I was born about the end of the ox-team age and the coming in of the horse and wagon, and a little later the horse and buggy. I got my schooling in a small school house, with one teacher for all of us. I never went to high school as the only high school in the county was at Sullivan.

"I worked on the farm, plowed corn with a one-horse plow, cut wheat with the scythe and cradle, threshed wheat with the old horse-powered machine. We never got more than a dollar for our wheat and fifty cents for corn. We raised hogs, cattle and sheep, and never got more than four cents for our hogs and cattle.

"Our church was the Church of Christ, a large log church named Concord. The log house was later replaced with a frame building used by the children and grandchildren of the founders of 1867. They went to church in wagons, on horseback, in sled and sleighs in the winter. I went to church as a baby on my mother's knee as she rode sidesaddle.

"The roads were all dirt winding through the woods, sometimes pretty crooked with no bridges across the ravines and creeks. Our homes were heated with large fireplaces built of rocks. Some of the people had wood-burning stoves; coal was not used much yet. I was 17 years old before coal was used, and then only for heating. That was one of our jobs...to cut wood for cooking and heating.

"Many evenings we cooked our supper before the fireplace. Mother would bring in the cornbread and warm milk, cook the potatoes in the hot ashes at the end of the back log, and that popcorn, my my!...and the homemade mince pie warmed by the fire...some eating! The dog and cat were there to get their share too. I remember the crocks full of sweet milk, the nice-churned butter, the good smoked hams and bacon smoked with hickory wood.

"Sullivan, ten miles southeast, was our place of business being the county seat. Shelburn, five miles east of us, was our post office. We got our mail once a week when weather was good. We had one weekly paper, the Sullivan County Democrat and some of us took the Cincinnati Enquirer.

"That was how we got the news when presidential year came around. We had a lot of fun at rallies, flag pole raisings, political speakings in the school house and in groves, glee club, bands and most anything to make a noise.

"The young folks I ran around with were nearly all members of families

Historically Speaking

By Dorothy Clark



that went to church, so we didn't dare to dance, but had play parties or musical entertainments, ice cream suppers and such like. Many of the old people thought the Devil lived in the fiddle!

"I went to school 'til I was 17 years old, then went to Business School at Terre Haute to the Isbell-Miller School in the third floor of the

Montgomery Ward building two winters. I roomed at the corner of Sixth and Eagles streets and boarded with Mrs. Tremaine for \$1.50 a week where the college campus is now.

"I lived on a farm 'til I was 40 years old, then moved to Terre Haute in 1907. While living on the farm, I came to Terre Haute quite often. The first time I was here was when they

were building the present court house. I remember the boss carpenter, Jake Kimble, was carving a large lion's head on the east porch. There used to be one over each of the doors, but they are gone now.

"I came to the Fairs out at what is now the Memorial Stadium. There was not much town east of Nineteenth Street. Edgewood was fenced in with a high woven wire fence and deer were running around all over the place.

"There was a large building north of Collett Park called the Coliseum, which was moved out to the southwest corner of the fairgrounds. I heard Gene Debs make a Socialist speech in 1897 or 1898 (not certain which). He was a great orator. They

born in 1867

Wigo County Public Library

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

had the fastest racetrack out there of anyplace in the country. I remember the great race horse at that time, Axtell.

"One branch of the street railway ran up Thirteenth Street to Indiana Avenue, then across to Collett Park. They had one double-deck car used to haul passengers to the Park when the Ringgold Band performed there Sunday afternoons and nights with big attendance.

Mr. Dix concluded his remarks with "I have been in Terre Haute since 1907, but the town of those days is gone. There is not one business on Main Street now that was there then. The part of town north of Maple Avenue, between Thirteenth and Seventh streets, was called the 'bon ton' part of town."

Crowing like roosters, falling off logs

T s FEB 6 1983

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

When he was retired and living in Florida, Jerome V. "Jerry" Soeder, looked back over his 96 years and recalled hearing the whistle of a railroad locomotive which crowed like a rooster announcing Grover Cleveland's election in 1892. The emblem of the Democratic Party was the picture of a rooster in a circle.

In 1896 he was thrilled listening to the silver-tongued orator, William Jennings Bryan, as he expounded on the benefits of the free coinage of silver and how we were being crucified on a cross of gold. However, William McKinley won the election with a campaign slogan of "a full dinner pail."

Soeder followed the daily newspaper accounts of each battle following the sinking of the battleship "Maine" in Havana Harbor. He was born and reared on small farm in Daviess County, Ind. At the age of 18 he attended sessions at Indiana State Teacher's College (now Indiana State University) in Terre Haute, taught school during the winter, then returned to college. After leaving college he worked for the Vandalia Railroad, which later became part of the Pennsylvania Railroad. During almost all of his 50

years employment, he sold passenger travel in the Union Station. Following this retirement, Soeder established with B. Cole Thomas the World Wide Travel Service and traveled all over the world, retiring for the second time in 1965, and moving south in 1970.

Back in 1906 and 1907, young Jerry had nothing else to do, so he applied for a job ushering at the Grand Opera House. Dressed in bright red uniforms, the ushers guided the local "society folks" dressed in formal attire, to their seats. The ushers also got to see some wonderful shows that were produced and rehearsed in New York in those days and then sent out on the road for mostly one and two night stands.

At the end of the season the theatre scheduled a hypnotic show for an entire week. During the show the hypnotist asked for volunteers to come up on the stage and be hypnotized as subjects. His buddy, Fred Muncie, persuaded him to join him as a volunteer. Fred proved to be a very good subject, but Jerry could not concentrate and resisted all suggestions of the hypnotist.

The featured hypnotist had written a book describing the process and mechanics of getting the subject into the proper hypnotic state. Since

Fred was such a good subject he gave him a copy of the book. After reading it, Fred loaned it to Jerry who found it interesting and studied it carefully.

Later, at a party one evening, Fred asked Jerry to hypnotize him. He hesitated, but he insisted, saying that he felt like he could do it. So, they borrowed a hatpin with brilliants on one end from one of the girls. Another girl agreed to play "Beautiful Blue Danube" on the piano. Fred sat in a rocking chair while he was briefed on the method of getting him awake after the experiment was completed.

Jerry planned to snap his fingers and say, "All right, you are" and Fred would wake up immediately. He leaned back in the chair while Jerry twirled the brilliants in front of his eyes and talked to him in a firm, low voice, telling him he was getting sleepy, sleepier, etc. When Fred began to breathe with slow deep breaths, Jerry knew he was in a state of hypnotic sleep.

However, things did not go smoothly in this first experiment. Instead of following instructions, Fred began to flail his arms around in a wild manner and scared the party guests. He was quickly awakened before the party was completely broken up.

On another occasion, Jerry hypnotized Fred and took him on an imaginary fishing trip, describing the details to him as they crossed the field, climbed fences, came to a creek, got out on a log, and cast hooks into the water. Fred got a bite, got excited, the log began to wobble and he fell into the water.

Looking back now, it was a cruel way to treat a helpless subject but no damage was done. Fred pulled his pant legs up over his knees and climbed upon the sofa hastily vacated by its occupants. Fred was a modest chap and afterward was quite embarrassed.

On another occasion when Fred was alerted from his hypnotic sleep, he was told he was a rooster. He really thought he was a rooster, jerking his head back and forth as he walked, looking sideways like he had eyes on both sides of his head, crowing and flapping his arms for wings as he flew up on the roost and put his head under a wing to sleep. That was a good show for the spectators, and some of them laughed so hard they cried.

The subject of hypnotism has fascinated Mr. Soeder all his life, and we wonder how many others were influenced by the professional show at the old Grand Opera House so many years ago.

Old stories the stuff that writes history

Ts OCT 2 1983

By Dorothy J. Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

Historically speaking

Every senior citizen of Terre Haute and the Wabash Valley who has attained the 80th year can tell many interesting stories of early childhood and school days. Nearly every oldster will have unique life experiences to relate that only he or she could remember. These memories are colored by the particular locality in which they lived, by their parents, grandparents, other relatives and neighbors.

Sometimes this writer has a distinct feeling of urgency to contact these people and take down their life stories before it is too late. Too often someone trying to trace a family tree is heard to lament, "If only Aunt Jane was still living she could tell me all about that side of the family."

Area senior citizens with interesting stories that possibly only they can tell — bits of history that will be lost or unknown unless they are recorded for future generations to come — are invited to contact this writer. The more birthdays recorded, the more the memories to tell!

From Montgomery, Ala., Eve G. Willis wrote about being born in 1899 in the old Mother Eaton brick house on North Main Street in Sullivan, Ind. Her mother died when Eve was only 4 years old, so her father boarded the two of them at the old National Hotel run by Ella Kaufman.

At that time Eve was not old enough to go to school, and she can remember "running wild" while her father was at work. She knew all the stores, the store keepers and Sunny Jim Willis, the kindly sheriff. Mrs. Willis worked at Sears while she lived in Terre Haute, and remembers Sullivan and this city with much affection.

From his retirement home in Fort Myers, Fla., Ralph Hackwith writes about his mother's family. She was Anna A. Ball, the daughter of Capt. Richard D. Ball (Union Army) and his wife, Anna, who migrated from Virginia. Their children were Anna A., Emma, Charles and Winfield.

The two sons worked at the Hudnut Hominy Mills which later became the dAmerican Hominy Mills. Winfield was a superintendent, and Charles a foreman. One early evening Charles was walking by the Hudnut Mill on his way to town when he noticed an open window high up in a tower. With his key he went inside and climbed the rickety stairway leading up to the window. Suddenly the stairs gave way and he fell to a floor quite a distance down, breaking his back and rendering him unable to move. All night he fought off the rats who came to drink his blood, but he managed to survive the ordeal.

Winfield Ball married Bridget O'Donnell, and their children were Josephine who married Ray Davis; Jessie who married Joe Sedletzack; Charles, teller for the Terre Haute First National Bank; and George, employed at the Federal Building.

After Mr. Hackwith's father died in 1920 in Missouri, Ralph and his mother returned to Terre Haute. Ralph became a buyer in the men's wear at the Root's Store for 18 years, at National Tailors, and in 1943, for the U.S. Corps of Engineers at Vigo Plant for more than six years.

Hackwith married Hazel Newport, a hosiery clerk at Root's; she later was with the City Board of Health and Vital Statistics when the city and county boards of health merged. She retired in 1960. He retired in 1970 after working 21 years selling Chevrolets.

His memories of the Indiana Theater were of Margaret Hicks, who played the organ there a number of years, and of the "bank nights" that drew large crowds because one had to be present to win if the name was drawn.

When he first came to Terre Haute he enjoyed attending the Hippodrome Theater and sitting in the front row of the balcony, the "best seats in the house because no one could sit in front of you." Tickets were 35 cents to see 11 acts of vaudeville, a comedy and news reel. They changed the program twice a week.

He worked for a while in the Martha Washington Candy Store next door, and the actors used to come in to buy candy, newspapers and magazines.

Preferring to remember Terre Haute as it was in 1970 when they left town, they have not been back to see the downtown demolition and the many changes that have been made. They have kept up with local news by reading the newspapers and hearing from his cousin, Myrtle Perigo, and Hazel's brothers, Al and Arthur Newport.

Vigo County Public Library

DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

Valley Heritage

here for 102 years

Scott watched history happen

George A. Scott (1862-1964) was for many years Terre Haute's oldest practicing attorney. He was born in 1862 in Montezuma, Ind., was brought to Terre Haute that same year and lived here all his life until his death at the age of 102.

His father, Judge John T. Scott, was elected district attorney in 1860 and again in 1862. In 1868 and again in 1872 he was elected Judge of the Indiana Supreme Court, the only person from Vigo County ever to sit on that bench.

His mother was Rebecca E. Jones of Scotland, Ill. There were three sisters and one brother. His eldest sister, Sarah, taught in the local high school and was head of the math department at her death. Sarah Scott Junior High School was named in her honor.

Eugenie Scott graduated from Normal School, but didn't care for teaching and chose to be the family homemaker.

Anna Gertrude Scott taught school for 10 years before marrying Kirby C. Meyers a druggist in Brookfield, Ind.

Historically speaking



Clark is Vigo County's official historian and formerly worked for The Terre Haute Tribune.

By Dorothy Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

The brother, Charles E. Scott, graduated from Rose Polytechnic Institute and became an architect. He served as city building inspector in Terre Haute for several years.

George A. Scott studied law in his father's office. He married his high school sweetheart, Jennie Bell, and they had three sons: John T., Richard W., and Malcolm C., retired music teacher and band

director at Gerstmeier High School.

When interviewed as he was nearing the century mark, Scott was asked about his earliest memories. His first recollection was seeing his father reach up and take a spelling book off the top of the kitchen safe. He marveled at how high his father could reach.

His only recollection of the Civil War was seeing his uncle leave their home at 1517 N. Seventh St. to return to active duty. This was late March 1865. His uncle was wearing a bright new uniform with a shiny new canteen hung over his shoulder. Because the canteen was on the child's eye level, young George remembered the bright new cork stopper.

In 1866 Scott attended the last county fair held at the fairgrounds on North Seventh Street. The next year, 1867, he attended the first fair held at the new fairgrounds located where the stadium is now. This was also the Indiana State Fair.

Judge Scott took all his children to see the city's sights.

They saw the first oil well with its drum and pump location in the middle of what is now the parking lot at the southeast corner of Seventh and Cherry streets.

They watched the artesian water flowing from the well into the gutter down to Ninth and a Half Street and into the Wabash & Erie Canal.

They all enjoyed trying out the famous "echo" at the well site.

He entered the A.B.C. Class at the Indiana State Normal School and graduated from Terre Haute High School in 1881, the year he purchased the first bicycle ever brought to town. Originally owned by local druggist Charles Bauer, the bike was the high type with the big wheel in front and the small wheel in the rear.

Scott recalled attending a demonstration of the first talking machine here. He visited the first telephone exchange in the attic over Buntin's Drug Store.

Community Affairs File

Vigo County Public Library

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

northeast corner of Sixth and Wabash. For a few months in 1885 he was employed by the first electric light company in town which furnished arc lighting to 50 subscribers. His job as light trimmer was to replace the carbons.

In February 1883 Scott saw the first electric railroad motor exhibited in a storeroom window at 608 Wabash Ave. A sleight of hand artist attracted crowds to the exhibit and predicted that before another year the city would have electric street cars, but they didn't appear until 1889.

Scott saw the first automobile driven on Terre Haute streets in 1898 by a cigar salesman. It had four buggy wheels with solid rubber tires, no top. It was powered by steam and guided by a handle in front of the driver.

He saw his first motion picture in Terre Haute in a storeroom at 663 Wabash on a screen two feet long and 20 inches high. About 25 chairs had been placed in the 30 foot space

allotted to this storeroom venture. For the admission of 5 cents, 10 pictures of three minutes each were shown. Every half hour the show was repeated to a new set of spectators.

Following World War I in 1920, Scott saw the first airplane show here. Two out-of-town flyers advertised they would put on a flying exhibition at the fairgrounds. Several thousand people came to see the show, but a strong southwest wind prevented the performance. The next day was calm, and the show thrilled the spectators as advertised.

In his later years, Scott had outlived all his long-time friends and associates. He still had children and grandchildren, but it had been his custom to be the first to call certain of these friends on New Year's Day. One day he called me to wish me "Happy New Year," and kept up the custom until his death in 1964. I miss his keen memories of local history and people.

Clark, Dorothy

Longevity

ts JAN 04 1987

in Terre Haute

Allen, Hahn oldest earlier this century

On Feb. 3, 1904, the oldest person who was born in Terre Haute was 82-year-old Nathaniel Allen. He was born in 1822 in a small three-room frame house on the east side of First Street between Ohio and Walnut streets. He saw Terre Haute grow from a village to a large, flourishing city.

Allen's parents were Ira and Lydia (Cargil) Allen. His father died in 1869 in Clay County. His mother died in Terre Haute in 1871.

Nathaniel Allen married Nancy West, who died in 1869. He married Ada E. Kelley in 1870, and they made their home at 222 S. 13½ St., both hale and hearty in 1904.

Allen had three children: Myron H. Allen, Boseman, Mont.; Mary Hussey, San Jose, Calif.; and Clara Wilson, Butte, Mont. He had 12 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren ranging in age from 4 months to 15 years in 1904.

A well-known resident of the city, Allen was connected with the insurance firm of Kelley & Wagner. Allen, born when James Monroe was president, witnessed many historic events and changes in his lifetime.

Henry Hahn was born in Terre Haute in 1852. For many years, until his death in 1945, he was the city's oldest native-born citizen.

On Hahn's 90th birthday he was asked to tell some of his childhood memories. The son of Xavier and Marie Hahn, Henry was born next door to his father's shoe shop between First and Second streets on Wabash Avenue. Later in life he lived over 40 years on Route 1, Prairieton.

As a young man he made boots for Demas Deming, Chauncey Rose and the men of the Smith and Farrington families. In those days, there was no shoe store, and 20 men were working full-time making boots in Terre Haute.

He worked at this trade for two or three years before going into business for himself at age 21. He located on the south side of Main Street between First and Second. In those days the McGregor Distillery was going full tilt with about 6,000 barrels of liquor in storage.

Henry told how he and his young friends would get aboard a tree trunk and — using sticks as oars — paddle downstream on the Wabash & Erie Canal. He recalled there were few streets, and those they had were unpaved with plenty of chuck holes. Everything was hauled by dray.

When the Dreiser-Dresser family came to Terre Haute from Sullivan for an overnight visit they were put up at

Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

the Hahn's house. Henry's father financed the Indianapolis doctor's visit to Terre Haute to correct the cross-eyes of Paul Dresser's sister, Theresa Dreiser. It was young Henry who had the task of holding Theresa while the doctor deftly operated without the aid of anesthesia.

He could remember when the cornerstone of the first St. Benedict's Church was laid, because that was the same Sunday morning he made his first communion. The pastor was Father O'Connor.

He recalled the tragedy concerning the old wagon bridge on Ohio Street. Cattle were being herded across returning from pasture on the other side of the river. Just as they got on the drawbridge section, the bridge collapsed.

In the melee, a wagon in which a man, his wife and two little daughters were riding went down, and only the woman survived. Hahn was on the other side of the bank at the bend when the bridge fell. A circus was just coming through and the attendants had to take the elephants and other animals through the water. The circus people always stayed at the Clark House (hotel) when they came to town.

Henry recalled that the principal industry of Sibley Town, centered around what is now Third and Locust streets, was the making of iron for wagon wheels, buggies and coaches.

All the butcher shops in Terre Haute were located near Fourth and Walnut Streets. Proprietors were Wallace, Mitchell, Cook, Seabury and Lamb. Behind the butcher shops were the vegetable markets.

His uncle, Jacob Hawley, owned a blacksmith shop. Hahn's map of downtown Terre Haute as it was in 1864 can be studied at the Vigo County Historical Society's museum.

It would be interesting to learn who is the oldest person now living in Terre Haute who was born in the city. If anyone has any candidates, send the information to Historically Speaking, c/o The Tribune-Star, P.O. Box 149, Terre Haute 47808.

Community Affairs File

Vigo County Public Library

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Historically speaking *Valley* T. SEP 19 1982

A tribute to Frances Bretell Neill

By DOROTHY J. CLARK *ABlog*

It was in 1906 that Frances Bretell came to Terre Haute for the first time to visit relatives. She was nine years old and lived with her parents in Alexandria, Ind. Her father, Joseph Bretell, was employed with the Prudential Insurance Company.

Two of the places they visited on their sight-seeing tour were Rose Polytechnic Institute at 13th and Locust streets, and the Indiana State Normal School (now ISU).

The family moved to Terre Haute in 1908 and lived for many years at Sixth and Sycamore streets. Frances and her brother, Fred, were enrolled at St. Joseph's School, Fifth and Ohio streets.

In 1908 there were two buildings on the ISN campus — Old Main and Stalker Hall to the rear on Mulberry Street. The grounds were very well kept, she remembers, with sprinklers going to keep the grass

green and huge beds of bright red cannas and salvia to add color.

In the fall of 1911, Frances was enrolled in the Laboratory High School located in Stalker Hall. Some of the college professors also taught high school classes. She remembers Ivah Rhyan and Miss Bailly.

While she was in high school, the college library was built, then the Home Economics-Industrial Arts Building, with Miss Rhyan and Professor Laubach as department heads.

Professor Stalker gave Frances permission to enroll in the college during the summer of 1913 and again the following summer before she finished high school in June, 1915. She remembered Prof. Turman and Prof. Wisely.

Frances became a college student during the summer of 1915. The fee for a 12-week term was \$2.50 then. This fee continued until she finished

the three-year course in 1918. That totaled \$22.50 for the three years of 108 weeks, a decided contrast with present fees.

She recalled the construction of the old Science Building, then the early Fine Arts Building. Always living near the campus, it was easy for her to go on to school, earning her bachelor's degree in 1926 and a master's degree in 1936.

Moving been closely associated with the institution for 25 years it's difficult to realize all the changes which have taken place at ISN, later Indiana State Teachers College, and now Indiana State University, since her first visit in 1906.

Enjoying her hobbies of reading, writing, painting and music, Frances and her late husband, Walter Neill, also with Prudential, had two sons. Joseph T. Neill, married to Joan Anderson, is the chief engineer, body and designing department,

Ford Motor Company, Dearborn, Mich. John T. Neill, who married Barbara Reynolds, is employed at the Receiving Diagnostic Center, Youth Center, Plainfield, Ind., and administrative assistant at the Police Academy there.

The six grandchildren, at this writing, include a research attorney a public accountant, a Ford Motor employee, a student and football player at Stanford University, and two in high school in Plainfield.

Many readers will remember Frances Neill's mother, Mary Bretell, who operated an exclusive millinery shop in the Indiana Theatre Building on South Seventh Street.

Frances Bretell Neill taught music and arts and served as supervisor at Concannon School for 35 years. She takes pride in having been in three graduating classes, 1918, 1926 and 1936 from ISU.

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Century old in 1909

Sullivan woman saw transformation from prairie days to early automobiles

One of Indiana's oldest women in 1909 was Eleanor Combes who had celebrated her 100th birthday in her home about a mile south of Sullivan.

During her lifetime, she had seen the railroad displace the prairie schooner and the stage coach, and the steamboat take over from the river raft and canoe. The horse car was superceded first by the electric car, then the automobile, and she'd heard tell of airships and aeroplanes.

This aged woman had lived to see the bear, deer, wolf and wildcat disappear from Indiana. The Indians were gone with the wild game, the vast forests and the flutter of huge flocks of wild fowl.

She had lived through the administrations of President Madison down to William H. Taft. She saw the introduction of the telegraph and telephone, barbed wire instead of rail fences, and all the states added to the Union until they reached the Pacific.

Mrs. Combes was born Oct. 11, 1809, in Salem, Washington County, Ind., the daughter of John and Katherine McGrew of Pennsylvania. Her father migrated to find a bride in Kentucky and brought her to Salem. He cleared his government grant and built a log cabin where Eleanor McGrew was born. A brother, James McGrew, moved on into Illinois. There were six sisters, but only three, Mollie, Peggy and Katie, married and drifted away.

At the age of 20, Eleanor married Morgan Gambill in Greene County where her family had moved six years earlier. Their farm was on the present site of Dugger.

The Gambills built a log cabin on government land and had nine children before his death in 1856. A few years later she married William Combes. They had three children, one of whom died in infancy. Mr. Combes died in 1879.

Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

Of her 12 children, only five survived to her 100th birthday. They were Levi Gambill, eldest, age 74, who lived on a farm south of Dugger; Lucinda Gambill Walter, 72, who lived on a farm near Sullivan; Wiley Gambill, 66, former Sullivan County commission, with whom the mother made her home; Morgan Gambill, 55, who lived in the old homestead at Dugger; and Mrs. John Mason, 50, who lived near Dugger.

Her other children included John Gambill who died of typhoid the same week as his father; Hannah Gambill Griffin who died 1889; Elizabeth Gambill who died age 22; Mary Ann (Mrs. Joseph Goodman) who died 1884; William Combes Jr.; and William Howard Combes.

There were 36 grandchildren, 50 great-grandchildren, and 24 great-great-grandchildren in 1909.

Each of her husbands had left her financially comfortable, and she continued to live in Dugger until three years before her 100th when a severe illness made it necessary for her to live at her son's home.

When she was first married in 1829, her husband had to go to the mill at Vincennes or Merom for supplies. She bolted the door and kept the children in. The wolves howled at night. She kept a musket

close at hand when the Indians came around.

She recalled the political campaign of William Henry Harrison in 1840, the settlers organizing to go to the Mexican War, and Civil War days. She had lived through five wars in her century.

Mrs. Combes could neither read nor write because the people in her locality did not believe in education for women. She had never ridden on a train, but saw them pass her home. She had never been outside of three counties in Indiana: Sullivan, Washington and Greene, and had never been in a larger city than the county seats of those counties.

She had never seen a steamboat, streetcar and never been inside a store. The only prominent man she ever saw was Sen. Daniel W. Voorhees.

In Sullivan her second husband helped grade the E. & T. H. railroad, but her first husband never saw a train. He used oxen, yoked together, to do the plowing and hauling on his farm.

Content to remain at home with her family, in peace and comfort, Eleanor McGrew Gambill Combes always had too much to do, as she said, "to ride around on the cars anyhow." She walked with her children the fives miles to the Church of Christ at Antioch for half a century.

Expert with the spinning wheel and weaving loom, she could still sew a fine seam with her needle if someone would thread it. She had never used a sewing machine, and never liked their product. Her menfolk raised their own tobacco on the farm, but unlike so many pioneer women, she never used tobacco or snuff.

At 100 years of age, she ate only two meals a day, breakfast and a noon meal. She believed the evening meal kept people awake past an early bedtime and never indulged.

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

Vigo County Public Library

Isaiah Donham important local figure

TS MAY 10 1992

Isaiah Donham of Pierson Township, Vigo County, celebrated his 86th birthday with a family dinner at his residence, "Twin Groves Farm." The large party included children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, relatives, neighbors and friends.

He was born May 12, 1810, near the Ohio River, about 20 miles above Cincinnati, in Clermont County. At the age of 22, he began teaching school, but only for two terms.

On Feb. 28, 1833, he was married to Martha Ann Crossley, who was five years his junior, and on March 28, they began the journey in a covered wagon drawn by two yoke of oxen across the country to Indiana. On April 7, they called a halt in the woods about 12 miles southeast of Terre Haute, built their campfire and enjoyed a hearty meal.

Donham began the task of making a farm from the uncultivated lands of the prairie and the forests. He acquired 700 acres, and became a farmer and stock grower. Between 1852 and 1870, he served as trustee of Pierson Township. He was elected a state representative in 1870 and served as a state

Historically speaking



By Dorothy J. Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

Clark retired as The Tribune-Star's women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column since 1956. She is Vigo County Historian.

senator from 1876 to 1880.

As he was often quoted as saying, "he was born under the Madison dispensation, grew prosperous under the Monroe doctrine, suffered a John Quincy Adams relapse at the age of 15, and began his political career by casting his first vote for Old Hickory Jackson for president."

The old gentleman was an unflinching Democrat.

After 55 years of the good life and being mother of 10 children, Mrs. Donham went to her reward. Still hale and hearty, but almost blind, Donham enjoyed talking about pioneer days. He probably was the oldest resident of Pierson

Township at the time of the reunion party.

Among his early associates were Joseph Liston, who plowed the first ground in the county; Reuben Halstead; William Leavette; Thomas Harris; James Monroe; William Edmondson; and James Ferguson, who died at the age of 90 in Clay County.

Also, John Meyers, the Lees, the Starks, the Pucketts, and the Piersons were pioneers who helped blaze the way for civilization in Vigo and surrounding counties. Some of them assisted in cutting away the timber and trampling down the prairie grass where Terre Haute was built.

Donham's religious and political principles were those of the old school Baptists and Jacksonian Democrats. He never wavered in his support of the party, even during the dark days of Greeley in 1872.

The name of Donham is of Spanish origin and dates back to the middle of the 17th century, when one Singleton, a Don of Spain, was banished from the Spanish court by the king because of his liberal principles. He

traveled to the Highlands of Scotland, dropped his former name, retaining the title of Don, and adding the Saxon suffix Ham, written as two names.

The great-grandfather of Donham came to the colonies and settled in New Jersey. Nathaniel Donham, Isaiah's grandfather, moved to Ohio about 1795.

Isaiah's mother was a Ferguson, of Scotch and Irish descent. The Fergusons came from Ireland to the colonies, settling first in Maryland, then Pennsylvania, and from there to Kentucky, where Isaiah's mother was born. She died at the age of 95 years.

Four of the 10 children were living at the time the Bradshy's "History of Vigo County" was written: Mrs. Louisa Ferguson, H.Z., I.H., and Thomas F. Donham.

Mrs. Ferguson was a widow in 1891 and lived on a farm in Pierson Township. H.Z. and Thomas F. were partners in the law and real estate business in Terre Haute. I.H. was a carpenter and resided in Terre Haute.

An active Democrat like his father, Thomas F. was a member of the City Council. In 1890, Donham moved from his farm to the city to live with Thomas F. Donham.

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

Local woman lived to be 122 years

TS JAN 31 1993

(21) *Clark, Dorothy

Readers can recall in the not-too-distant past when Terre Haute stood tops in the nation for the greatest percentage of senior citizens. New figures are hard to come by, and all we know now is that our city has dropped way down in that senior citizen category.

Why, you ask? All the reference books at the library tell a different and confusing story. People are just living longer all over the country in spite of all the horror stories we hear constantly about pollution. It takes more than that to kill off senior citizens, let me tell you. Some of them are older than water!

This all goes to prove, we suppose, that Terre Haute is a healthy place to live to a ripe old age, and that retired people elect to stay near the banks of the Wabash River instead of moving to possibly warmer winter climates.

I'll take local climate anytime to humidity, pesky bugs, hurricanes, and overcrowded highways and other conditions. A change of seasons is my choice.

Proof that local residents do attain great ages was found in an old newspaper clipping. Unless someone can find proof of an older Terre Hautean, that honor still goes to Hannah Dickens who died May 20, 1918, at the remarkable age of 122 years and 12 days!

Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star's women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column since 1956. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

Born a slave in Corneta, S.C., in 1796, her life spanned the 19th century. This hardy black woman was a grandmother before she was freed by Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

Dickens' age was verified by the records of a will at Raleigh, N.C., in which the slaves of Ephraim Dickens, her master, were to inherit the plantations he owned. They were denied this inheritance by the courts and the so-called scheming brother of their master.

The Dickens family owned three large plantations in the Carolinas and more than a hundred slaves. Hannah's mother was stolen when she was a small child by a young planter. Unlucky at cards, he needed money and stole the little girl and sold her.

He cared nothing for the

heartache caused the child's mother when she returned from the cotton fields to learn her baby was missing. Because of this tragedy, Hannah never knew much about her mother's family. Her father was Axson Dickens.

Interviewed several years before her death, Auntie Dickens declared that slavery was far better than what she had since in making her own way. But, she was proud that she was no longer a slave, and would not change her condition for all the advantages of a kind "massah" and "missus."

"Marse Ephraim," as she called him, was kind to his slaves. She was never struck but a few times, and then only with a short piece of strap. She admitted that being overly "sassy" was the reason for the few "lickings."

After Ephraim died without heirs, his will stated that his old slaves should be allowed to remain on the plantation. However, the judge at Raleigh decreed that as slaves they had no legal rights to the property. He gave them and the properties to the brother, Lawrence Dickens, who was asked to oversee the plantations for the slaves by their dying owner.

Dickens remembered that the men whom the slaves dreaded most were the Speculators. Once

sold to them, they were treated like cattle. Many times she witnessed these men riding horseback and driving crowds of 50 to 100 blacks down the road. Some of the slaves would be weeping, while others were shouting and singing.

In her later years, Hannah's memories of the days before the Civil War were as fresh as events of more recent happenings. She moved with her husband to Parke County in the late 1870s and then to Terre Haute about 10 years later. Her mother lived to be 112 years old.

Of Hannah's eight children, six boys and two girls, only four survived her. Her daughter, Mrs. Vina Rose, lived in Greencastle. Her three sons, Bert, Drew and Farrow, lived in Terre Haute. She was making her home with Farrow Dickens at 1300 S. 14th St. at the time of her death.

According to the obituary, her funeral was conducted at the Trinity Baptist Church at 14th and Harrison streets and she was buried at Grandview Cemetery.

Attaining four-score years always was considered a great achievement, but to have lived 122 years must surely be the all-time record for Terre Haute.

Readers with knowledge of an older resident of the city are urged to contact this writer.